

Mission

*'Each of us is truly called, together with Jesus,
to be bread broken for the life of the world.'*

(Benedict XVI, The Sacrament of Love, 88).

With hope, we go out to the world. The celebration of Eucharist is also called 'Mass', because this means 'sending out'. We are sent out as baptized people, Jesus' disciples, the Body of Christ. Our mission is to take and live the Gospel and its values wherever we go.

For Reflection:

- For what are you most thankful?
- In what ways does God call you to be 'bread broken' and 'wine poured out' for others?
- Take some time to reflect upon some of your memories of celebrating Eucharist.
- What does it mean for you, your family and your parish community, to 'live eucharistically'?

The Eucharist is a powerful message for the men and women of today who are tempted to believe that they have been forsaken, that they are alone, for men and women who are afraid of sharing, of letting others into their lives, who refuse to promote life. In essence, the Eucharist says to them:

"Trust me, for I have given my life to you, even dying on the cross for you. Trust me, for I want to nourish you with my flesh. I want to make of your body my house. I want to share your existence and make you partake of my resurrection. You must not feel alone, because I am here with you. I can give meaning to your search, to your restlessness. Turn your sadness into joy and your lonesomeness into communion with your brothers and sisters".

(Cardinal Martini SJ, On the Body, page 80).

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Sacraments ~ Part 4

Sacraments of Initiation

It is Sunday. We are here, the Body of Christ, together. Visible and present to each other. Since the last time we gathered, we have followed Jesus on many different paths in all kinds of places. Now we bring it all to our celebration of Eucharist (Mass). This is a 'source' and 'summit' of our Christian living, prayer and worship.

*'For just as the body is one and has many members,
and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ'.*

(1 Corinthians 11:12).

When we are gathered, Jesus Christ is present with us:

in the community; we who are gathered together in Jesus' name (Mt 18:20)

in the person of the one who presides (the priest)

in the Word (Sacred Scripture) and

in consecrated bread and wine

(Vatican II, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, par 7).

The meals we share are important, not only because there is food, but because eating together strengthens and renews relationships. Special meals are high points in our lives, remaining with us in treasured memories because of those with whom we share.

We gather for Eucharist, around a table, with Jesus and a community we want to be with, remembering Jesus asked us, 'Do this in memory of me'. It is the Risen Jesus who feeds us.

First, the Scriptures nourish hearts and minds. When we really listen, we are well prepared for the next part of the celebration. It was after Scriptures were explained, that disciples en route to Emmaus recognised Christ, risen and with them, when he blessed the bread, broke and shared it with them (Luke 24:13-35).

*"Then he took a loaf of bread and when
he had given thanks,
he broke it and gave it to them, saying,
'This is my body, which is given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me.'
And he did the same with the cup after
supper, saying,*

*'This cup that is poured out for you is
the new covenant in my blood'"*

(Luke 22:19-20).



After dry summers, rain, earth, seeds, vines, 'the work of human hands' produce bread and wine. We are thankful. In the celebration of Eucharist (meaning 'thanksgiving') these gifts come to symbolise all God's gifts of love, given and received every day. We give thanks for everything we have received and offer it all back to God with the bread and wine.

During the Eucharistic prayer of blessing, praise and thanks to God, and through the power of the Holy Spirit and ministry of the priest, bread and wine is changed. Jesus Christ is present, in bread broken and wine poured out and shared:

'Under the consecrated species of bread and wine Christ himself, living and glorious, is present in a true, real, and substantial manner: his Body and his Blood, with his soul and his divinity.'
(Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994, par 1413).

In Communion, we do not simply receive bread and wine but the Risen Jesus himself, who enables us to continue his mission today.



Sacrifice of Self Giving Love

Bread broken...wine poured out...

When he washed their feet; Jesus taught his disciples the meaning of Eucharist;
*'I am giving you an example... Love one another as I have loved you.
There is no greater love than to lay down life for one's friends...
You are my friends, if you do what I command you... love one another.'*
(John 13:14; 15:12-14).

Jesus loved his own, all of us and all people, to the very end. Anyone who has loved deeply knows something of what this means. For Jesus, loving 'to the end' meant death on a cross - and the new life of Resurrection:

'In the Eucharist, Christ makes present to us anew the sacrifice offered once for all on Golgotha.' He is 'present in the Eucharist as the Risen Lord'
(Pope John Paul II, 'Stay with us Lord', 2005, par 15).

The proper fruit of Eucharist is Charity

'We are what we eat' has new meaning when we are talking of Eucharist! St Augustine, referring to the meaning of the 'Great Amen' at the end of the Eucharistic prayer, said, "Become what you receive! ... Be a member of Christ's Body, so that your 'Amen' may be the truth." As disciples of Jesus, the Body of Christ, we are called to LIVE EUCHARISTICALLY. This is the way to fullness of life and to eternal life.

From the beginning, the 'breaking of the bread' (Eucharist) was inseparable from life in community and sharing with those in need (Acts 2:43-47). When the Corinthian Christians divided into factions and let the poor go hungry, Paul reminded them, 'Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread' (1 Cor 10:16-18).

In our day, Cardinal Carlo Martini SJ explains, *'The proper fruit of the Eucharist is charity, the gift of our life to others'. The Eucharist, 'fills us with the Holy Spirit, which is a loving force that unites the Christian community and expands it to include the world.'* (Cardinal Martini SJ, *On the Body*, 81).

The Eucharist impels us to overcome conflict and build peace, Pope Benedict reminds us; *'The Lord...in a particular way, urges those in conflict to hasten their reconciliation by opening themselves to dialogue and a commitment to justice. Certainly, the restoration of justice, reconciliation and forgiveness are the conditions for building true-peace.'* (Benedict XVI, *The Sacrament of Love*, 89).

Hope

*'As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup,
you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.'*
(1 Corinthians 11:26).

Christians are people of Hope. The Eucharist gives us hope because Jesus Christ who is risen and with us now will be with us in the future:

'For us, the Eucharistic banquet is a real foretaste of the final banquet foretold by the prophets and described in the New Testament... to be celebrated in the joy of the communion of saints'. (Benedict XVI, *The Sacrament of Love*, 31).